

Feedback on Auckland Future Development Strategy 2023-2053

Stet Limited

About Us

Stet is a limited liability company formed in 2011 by Shaun Lee. The term 'stet' comes from the publishing industry and means undo changes. Stet is a social enterprise that supports restoration and conservation projects in New Zealand. We are an Auckland Council vendor and volunteer.



Shorebirds roosting at Whitford. Photo by Shaun Lee.

We support the plans attempt to limit in the impacts of growth on the natural environment but have significant concerns.

Developing a resilient natural environment.

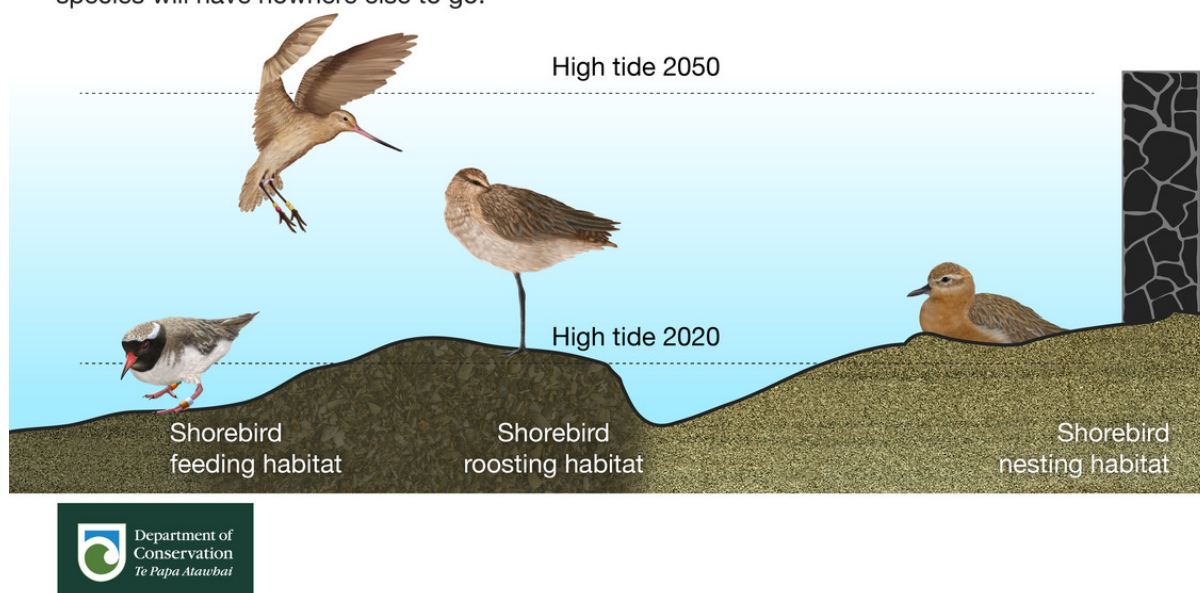
Auckland Council has statutory obligations to maintain indigenous biodiversity. Because Auckland / Tāmaki Makaurau is a coastal city, the most common threatened species Aucklanders are likely to encounter are shorebirds and gulls. 90% of New Zealand seabirds and 82% of New Zealand shorebirds are classified as threatened with or at risk of extinction¹

Sea Level Rise (SLR) threatens the feeding, roosting and nesting areas of these species. SLR has already crippled many local shorebird roosts, storms are causing major losses to nests and roosting areas. Auckland Council needs to 'hold the line' to limit erosion and protect private property, when it does this 'costal squeeze' will continue to reduce habitat. Coastal squeeze will continue to contribute to local extinctions and Auckland Council will continue to fail to meet its statutory obligations to maintain indigenous biodiversity. Auckland Council will not be able to halt the ongoing degradation of the shorebird habitat. What is unknown is when the losses will occur.

¹ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/extinction-threat-to-indigenous-marine-species>

Sea level rise destroys coastal habitats

On land, we build structures like seawalls to protect ourselves from the rising ocean. Squeezed between the water and the walls, coastal habitats will be reduced and many species will have nowhere else to go.



The Shoreline Adoption Plans are not predicting the losses, there are no open lines of enquiry on the topic at RIMU or within Environmental Services. Auckland Council seems to have 'FOFO' (a Fear Of Finding Out). It is critical Auckland Council quantify shorebird habitat loss, it can then plan for these losses and mitigate them where possible. Solutions range from closing sports fields at high tide for roosting shorebirds, setting aside open space for shorebirds that can feed in grass and building roosts that are better than the existing eroded shell banks.

The draft strategy (Auckland Future Development Strategy 2023-2053) makes Tāmaki a Spatial priority area for investment (Years 1-10). This area has had significant declines in shorebirds abundance resulting in local extinctions.

Wader trends at Tahuna Torea

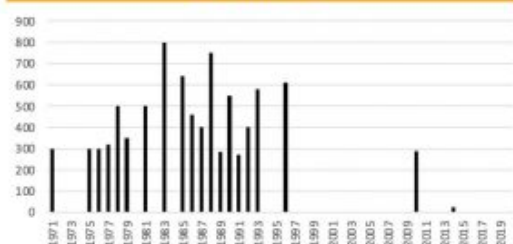
Collated by Shaun Lee in August 2021

Data collected by: Sylvia Reed, Chris Barfoot, Ronald Lockley, Michael Taylor, Michael Brinch-Pederson, Rowena West, Heather Rogers, Gillian Eller, Mark Eller, Jennie Preddey and Shaun Lee.

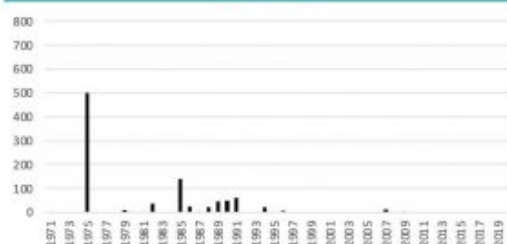


Kuaka Bar-tailed godwit

SUMMER

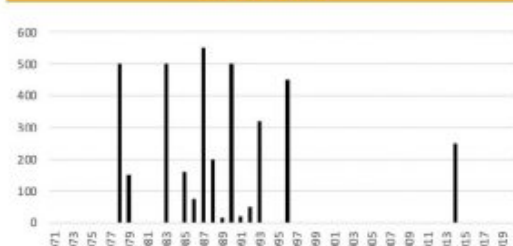


WINTER



Huahou Lesser knot

SUMMER

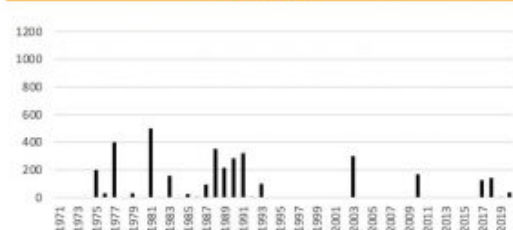


WINTER

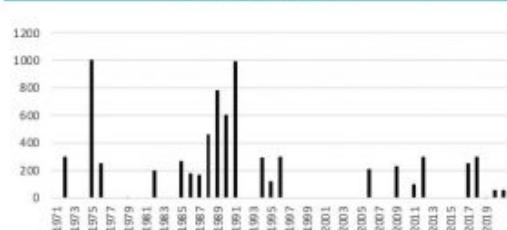


Torea South Island Pied Oystercatcher

SUMMER



WINTER



See report to the Ōrākei Local Board here². Stet wrote a report investigating the declines and found habitat loss to be the primary reason for these declines³

Examples of missed consideration in the plan

Without quantifying the impacts of SLR on shorebirds Council can't plan for it. Shorebirds and other sensitive species that live in coastal habitats would prefer growth to happen inland. Intensification on coastal margins will be worse for the threatened species that already live here. There are significantly less threatened species occupying inland suburban and rural farmland habitats.

1. The draft strategy recommends trees are planted, shorebirds and gulls can't use forests, without good planning these planting programs can exacerbate coastal squeeze.
2. The largest population of non beach-breeding Tūturiwhatu / Northern New Zealand dotterel (a conservation dependant species) live in Auckland. This is largely due to lost beach habitat due to a number of factors including SLR. Tūturiwhatu are reproducing successfully (with care from Birds New Zealand members) at Westgate but there is no consideration for them in the draft strategy for Westgate. As shorebird habitat is lost to SLR the value of open spaces and development sites for shorebirds will increase. Council should be planning for this.
3. No consideration for coastal open space for shorebirds.
4. Existing development plans in Tāmaki threaten shorebird breeding, roosting and feeding habitat (most directly at Point England). There are no significant plans to mitigate historic or future impacts in the draft strategy or elsewhere.

Spatial planning in an uncertain and changing environment.

Auckland Council should have mapped current roosting and breeding habitat for threatened shorebirds. It should have been an input layer used in Zonation to define the Biodiversity Focus Areas. We recommend Council start there and identify habitat losses by 2053 as part of the draft strategy development. Without doing this work these principles from the draft strategy mean nothing to our iconic threatened species:

Principle 2: Adapt to the impacts of climate change

Principle 3: Make efficient and equitable infrastructure investments

Principle 4: Protect and restore the natural environment

Principle 5: Enable sufficient capacity for growth in the right place and at the right time

Actions:

1. Please identify shorebird feeding, roosting and nesting losses due to SLR by 2053.
2. Please include shorebird habitat as resilient infrastructure in the plan.
3. Please limit development near the coast.
4. Please begin to mitigate historic development impacts.

² <https://blog.sh aunlee.co.nz/wader-population-trends-at-tahuna-torea/>

³ <https://blog.sh aunlee.co.nz/reversing-the-decline-of-the-shorebirds-of-the-tamaki-estuary/>

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

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